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VS2015
The Future of Veterinary Services

VS 2015:
A New Perspective

SEP 19 REC'D

Throughout its long history as the Nation's premier veterinary authority, Veterinary Services (VS)—a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service—has offered its stakeholders essential services that have helped to keep their animals healthy and businesses thriving. But the forces at work in animal agriculture today demand a new perspective and fresh approaches to an array of new advances and challenges.

Along with striking progress in animal health technology and disease identification has come the emergence (and reemergence) of myriad infectious diseases. Trade has expanded, and with it demand for 24-7 access to related services and resources—but so has the potential for exotic animal diseases and pests to enter the United States. While the health of animals remains VS' primary focus, it has also become inextricably linked with the health of people and the viability of our ecosystems. And while costs may rise for agriculture nationwide, budgets of U.S. Government agencies like ours may shrink.

Navigating this complex 21st century landscape demands flexibility, innovation, and partnership—the driving forces behind VS 2015. This initiative, 3 years in the making, is the product of valued input from our employees, our management team, and from you: the many localities, States, tribes, industries, universities, and others who are our stakeholders.

VS 2015 is about streamlining and retooling existing VS operations so that you benefit from improved efficiency and service. It is about enhancing diagnostics and disease management, fine-tuning our readiness and response to emergencies, investing in technical infrastructure, and building ever-broader networks for collaboration. It is about involving you more closely in important regulatory decisions that may affect you.

Most important, VS 2015 is about results: giving you what you need, when and how you need it.

VS already offers stakeholders a broad range of support and services in vital areas: the import and export of animals, animal products, and biologics; emergency preparedness and response; animal disease diagnostics; animal vaccine development; and animal disease surveillance, control, and eradication. But in response to the most pressing needs of today, VS has identified a special group of priority issues to be addressed in 2011 and 2012. These priorities include:

More flexible, transparent regulatory frameworks for animal disease traceability and other issues. After extensive outreach to and engagement with stakeholders, we have published an animal disease traceability regulation for livestock moving interstate. This represents a significant milestone in VS' evolution: a move to a performance-based rather than a prescriptive approach to regulation. We will help States and tribes develop, document, and implement their traceability plans by providing funds through cooperative agreements, providing low-cost identification (ID) tags, making other ID technology available for purchase, and establishing an information technology (IT) infrastructure to support traceability. We will also establish traceability implementation plans for achieving regulatory compliance, proper administration of official ID devices, and evaluation of State and tribal plans. In addition, using the traceability experience as a model, we will implement changes to current bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and pseudorabies regulations.

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Animal import/export. VS is currently evaluating and refining the concept of export centers to determine if it can be expanded to cover the United States and to eventually include other services such as facility inspection/approvals for select agents, biologics, laboratories, and other export facilities. We are also developing electronic inspection and certification processes, starting with export products certification.

Emergency management (EM). We are developing new EM tools that include a plan for a secure milk supply, swine euthanasia technology, and ways to expand our ability to mobilize non-Federal employees to respond to emergencies. We will also develop and implement a plan to communicate with you about how to use a wide range of EM tools and identify high-priority IT systems for EM for development and deployment.

Surveillance. We are implementing a comprehensive, integrated surveillance plan for swine health that will include broad-ranging data for analysis and decisionmaking, and we are generating a timeline to address commodity-specific surveillance plans. In addition, we are developing policies and standards that address data confidentiality and information sharing, as well as a cross-functional IT infrastructure for national surveillance information management, analysis, and dissemination.

Wildlife diseases. Cost-benefit analyses for reducing the prevalence of wildlife diseases, as well as the risk of transmitting them, are essential items for us. We expect our first analysis of this kind to focus on brucellosis in the Greater Yellowstone Area.

One Health. In addition to integrating One Health initiatives into daily VS activities, we will continue to build new collaborations and partnerships in the One Health community.

Regular program review. In recognition of the changing needs of agriculture, global animal health, and stakeholders, VS will routinely reevaluate program goals and strategies—a process to include cost/benefit and risk analysis as well as stakeholder input.

These immediate priorities are only the beginning of our ambitious goals and objectives for the evolution of VS, now and in the years ahead. We are committed to this path of progress and to serving you by enhancing and refocusing the strengths that have made VS an internationally recognized and trusted partner. We look forward to your continuing participation in this dynamic vision for our future and to providing you with the benefits of our new approach. And, we invite you to visit our VS 2015 Web page at **www.aphis.usda.gov/vs2015**, where you will find detailed descriptions of our initiative, project plans, and more.

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